

Child and Family Services Update

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Utah Chosen For National Project To Recruit And Retain Resource Families

By Lisa McDonald, Utah Foster Care Foundation

Child welfare agencies involved with foster care in the state of Utah have been included in a nationwide project to increase the recruitment and retention of resource families. Casey Family Programs National Center for Resource Family Support, together with the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, is sponsoring the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) on Recruiting and Retaining Resource Families.

In this BSC, 25 public child welfare agencies and tribes from around the nation that share a commitment to improving the way they recruit and retain resource families, including foster, kinship, and adoptive families, and to making major, rapid changes that will produce breakthrough results, are being brought together to share knowledge, challenges, and successes.

Each selected agency has put together a team that will work together to make changes and implement new systems over the course of one year. Teams from across the country will be guided and mentored by a faculty of national experts in the field as they study, test, and implement the latest knowledge and evidence available. All four-person teams will come together for three two-day Learning Sessions and will be expected to test changes and measure the impact of these changes.

The Utah BSC team consists of Child and Family Services Out-of-Home State Specialist Angela Khairallah as the Day-to-Day Leader, Child and Family Services Eastern Region Director Beverly Hart, Resource Parent and UFAFA Second Vice President Karen Sitterud, and UFCF Program Development Specialist Lisa McDonald. Overseeing the project is Child and Family Services Deputy Director Patti Van Wagoner serving as Senior Leader. The Office of Licensing is also supporting this project.

The pilot site selected to begin the BSC project is the Carbon and Emery counties area in Eastern Region. A pilot site workgroup has been formed consisting of foster care agencies and community partners such as educators, legislators, and judges.

Areas of focus are in messaging; engaging resource families during the recruitment process; supporting families and children through the process and preparing them for placement; licensing; providing services and supports for resource families; developing relationships and supporting involvement with the agency; involving the community; and staffing. The core team along with the pilot site workgroup is in the process of developing tests in each of the focus areas to try out and implement new ideas to build a more effective foster care system.